Central American NEWSLETTER

Newsletter of the Central American Group of the Spanish Main Society.

Editor: Michael P Birks, Flixton Girls' School, Urmston, Manchester M31 3DR, England 061-747 5924 (Home)

Vol II, No.39 April 1990

EDITORIAL

The next issue of our Newsletter will of course be Number 40 and will mark a personal milestone - five years as your editor. I had hoped to produce something special for this issue, but alas, as things stand, this will not be. Indeed I have very little to put in it. If you are working on a piece for publication, now would be a good time to send it. A good response will yield a bumper issue which would be very satisfying to me personally, and you can believe me when I say that as your editor, I need all the encouragement I can get!

Once again March 24th will see another provincial meeting here in Manchester (Hopefully Bath next year). The morning will be devoted to two major displays and I must confess to indulging myself on this occasion, by inviting John Whiteside to ahow 160 sheets of his superb Nicaragua. That is not to say Peter Brack's Venezuela will not be equally tantalising, and a must if you have never seen a good collection of this country. Professor West and Colin Eddleston will take the floor after lunch, presenting various aspects of Chile. I must know in advance if you are coming, to comply with licensing laws. Details from me, at the above address.

Mike Birks

SPANISH MAIN Annual subscription £5 (UK), £6 (Europe), $15 (elsewhere) The subscription includes four copies of Mainsheet, and also private treaty lists and auction catalogues.

Secretary: Brian Moorhouse, PO Box 105, PETERBOROUGH PE3 8TQ, England.

The society also runs two specialised groups, the Central American and the Chile groups. The subscription to each group is £3 (UK) or $7 elsewhere, to Spanish Main members, or $10 to non-members (Overseas subscriptions only). This includes four copies of the respective Newsletter, by airmail.

HONDURAS: THE INAUGURATION OF PRESIDENT COLINDRES' ISSUE

by JOSE T MEJIA

The Inauguration of President Colindres' issue appeals to me in two ways. First this is one of the seventeen issues printed by the Honduras Government Printing Works (GPW) which is in my philatelic field, and secondly because the President and I share the same surname, although we are not related. (The President's name was Vicente Mejia Colindres; the latter two names are the father and mother surnames used in Spanish speaking countries. Properly, this is the President Mejia's issue).

By November 1926 the Government Printing Works had added photoengraving equipment to its facilities in the capital city of Tegucigalpa. Accordingly, the name of the printing works was changed from 'National Lithography' to 'National Lithography and Photoengravings'.

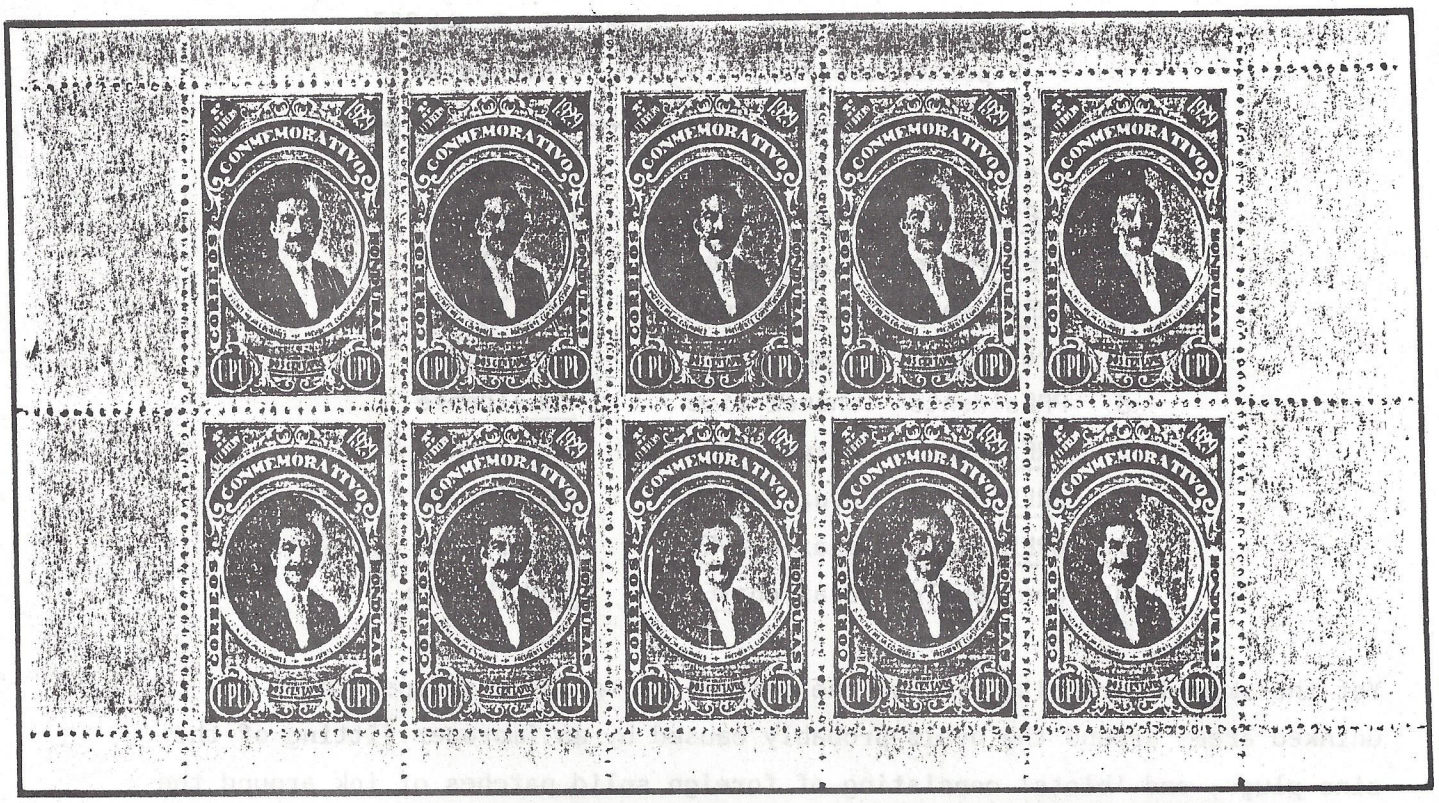
The President Colindres' issue (SG 259-60, Scott 256-7) was the only issue printed by the new equipment. The printing was made by a combination line and half-tone block. The portraits of Colindres and Chavez appear in half-tone and the remainder of the design is line engraved.

Philatelically this combination is rarely encountered. The Hohe Rinne (Hungary) Hotel Post stamps of 1924 were printed by this method, but both the lines and the half-tone portraits were multiplied by photoengraving (see 'Fundamentals of Philately' by L N and M Williams). In contrast, the Government Printing Works made a line block where holes for the portraits were cut through allowing for the insertion of plugs bearing Colindres' and Chavez' portraits.
The half-tone effect was produced by a diagonal screen of 150 lines to the inch. In the lighter portions of the design, the dots are quite separate, but they run together and form a confused mass in the darker portions of the design.

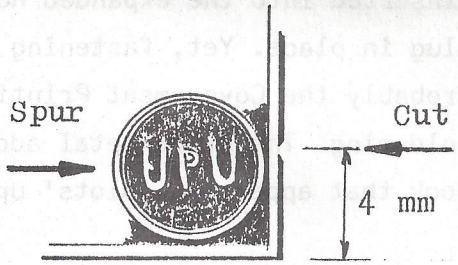
That the stamps were printed by typography can be inferred from the characteristic 'bite' of typographic printing on the face of the stamps and the fact that the ink covering the surface of the lines of the design was squeezed outwards, towards the edges.

The stamps were printed on pre-gummed paper. When stacking the printed sheets, the wet ink stained the gummed side of the stamps filling in the gum cracks with ink (the gum is cracked diagonally in both directions).

Two philatelically significant flaws can easily be seen on all the 2c stamps (SG 260, Scott 257). They are (i) a cut in the lower right frame line located 4mm above the lower right corner and (ii) a white spur on the left leg of the first 'U' of 'UPU' at the same corner (see diagram on next page).



President Colindres (SG 260, Scott 257)



Die flaws on the 2c

The easiest way of plating these stamps is by studying the position of the portraits in relation to the inscriptions around the ovals and the flaws at the edges of the half-tone plugs.

On the 1c stamp, the inscription under Colindres portrait reads:

Ing RAFAEL DIAZ CHAVEZ - VICE PRESIDENTE DE LA REPUBLICA

On the 2c stamp the inscription reads:

D. VICENTE MEJIA COLINDRES + PRESIDENTE CONSTITUCIONAL

The peak of the 'V' formed by the front lapel of the suit jacket points towards different letters on the inscriptions. In this way, a skewed portrait can be identified by a set of letters as follows.

	SG 259, Scott 256		SG 260, Scott 257
	V points towards -		V points to
Pos.	Colindres	Chavez	
1	presiDENTE	diaz chAVez	presIDEnte
2	PRESIdente	diaz chavEZ	PREsidente
3	prESIDEnte	diaZ Chavez	preSIDente
4	pRESIDente	diaZ Chavez	preSIDente
5	presiDENte	diaz chAVez	presiDENte
6	PREsidente	chaveZ Vice	PREsidente
7	PREsidente	chavez VIce	PREsidente
8	pRESidente	diaz cHAvez	pRESidente
9	pRESidente	diaz chaVEz	pRESidente
10	presiDENTe	diaz chaVEz	+Presidente

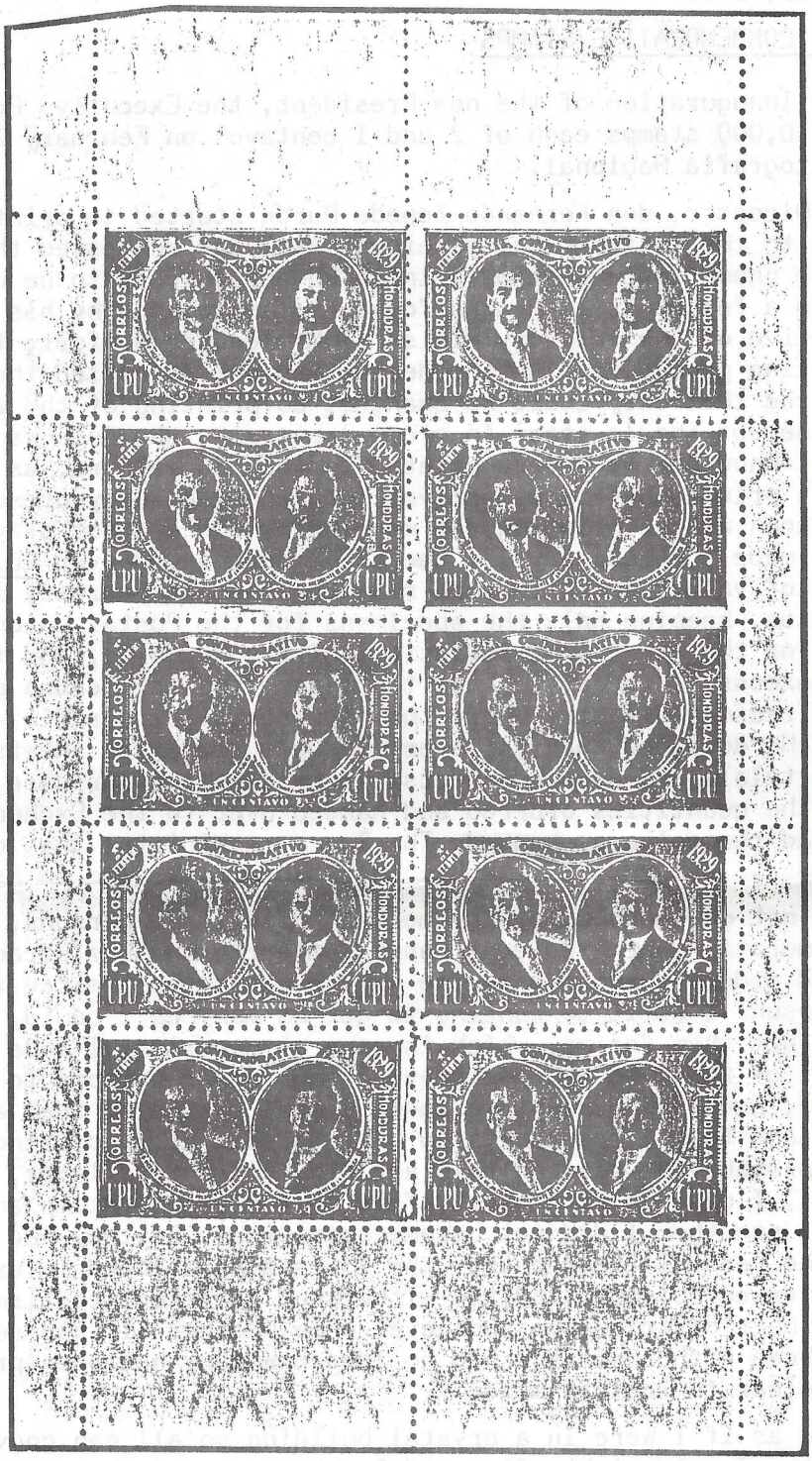
Yet the skewed portraits are not the only flaws on these stamps. There are uninked areas around the ovals probably caused by an improper fitting of the zinc plugs, and 'blots' consisting of foreign solid patches of ink around the ovals.

A properly fitting plug can be fastened to the printing block by cooling the block after expanding it by heating. The plug is inserted into the expanded hot block which upon cooling contracts securing the plug in place. Yet, fastening a loose plug to the block is a different problem. Probably the Government Printing Works joined the plugs to the printing block by soldering. The extra metal added by soldering formed the raised portions on the block that appear as 'blots' upon printing.

Also note that the 2c stamp in position 10 shows a vertical line at the right side of Colindres' portrait. This line probably is the right edge of the Colindres' rectangular photoengraving from where the plugs were cut. This line appears also in positions 2 and 7.

The sheets were pin rouletted 11½. The pins pierced but did not remove any paper material. From the back of the sheet the paper rises above the sheet, and from the front, the rouletting left small craters.

All Government Printing Works' issues were perforated 11½ but it is common for the perforation pins not always to penetrate the paper and therefore in the same sheet both perforating and a seeming roulette occurs. My guess is that the Hondurans learned to sharpen the perforator pins as if they were needles instead of sharpening them flat.



President Colindres and Vice-President Chavez

(SG 259, Scott 256)

∞∞∞

El Cronista, July 15, 1929

"EXPLANATION ON THE COMMEMORATIVE STAMPS

To commemorate the inauguration of the new President, the Executive Power authorised the issue of 10,000 stamps each of 2 and 1 centavos on February 2, to be produced by the Litografia Nacional.

At that time, its Director, don Fernando Zepeda Durón started to print this issue strictly according to the instructions received. As I had suggested this issue, he called me on the phone to request my opinion on the colours to be used. But I was only able to go a few hours later and found him surrounded by his employees and the representative of the Treasury Ministry, Mr Teodoro Monfort; they were surveying the printing procedure. As the decree had not specified the colours to be used, I considered that they could be changed, so printing of the 2c stamp was continued in carmine, of the 1c stamp in green, reversing the colours used before my arrival. I don't know how many were printed in the new colours, as neither they nor the sheets printed before my arrival were counted in my presence. I left the Litografia as soon as the printing was concluded, and did not stay when the official count was made. On February 12, the Exchequer handed over 20,230 stamps to the accountancy of values which in turn remitted them on February 15 to the postal administration, keeping only the specimens for the Postal Union in Berne and small amounts for the other administrations of the Republic, and the 230 stamps printed in excess. In order to know the reason for this extra printing, I was called to the Treasury Ministry where the Director of Litografia was reporting on the matter. He declared that for every issue a few extra sheets are printed, to account for trials and damaged sheets. In this particular case, 230 stamps were printed over the quantities ordered and handed over to the Exchequer. I also explained that I had the colours changed. The Treasury Minister then ordered that the 230 extra stamps be returned to the Exchquer, which was done on February 16.

So the issue would not get monopolised by certain privileged persons, as was the case for the commemoratives of President Lopez Gutierrez and Paz Baraona, the Postmaster received orders that sale to the public was to be limited to twenty-five stamps per person. I admit to wanting to get as many as I could, so I sent various persons to get them for me, which is general practice. I thus secured a pretty large amount of them. On the next day, I sent other persons to the post-office on my behalf, and each brought me their quota. I stacked them all together in the same place, and took a few sheets to give to some of my distinguished friends, who will probably be reading this article. A few days later, when counting what I had left, I came up with ninety-five of the red 2c stamp and ten of the green 1c. When I saw them I did not become suspicious, as they had been printed together with the rest. I thought that the 230 stamps printed in excess must be those of the reversed colours, and the withdrawal statement confirms this. I did not attend to their distribution and never knew whether all the reversed colour stamps had been withdrawn as I had no idea how many had been produced, so all should now be clear to logical minds.

I have always acted as if I were in a crystal building so all can convince themselves of my honesty. I sold eighty-five red 2c stamps to an honourable gentleman of this city for 30cts apiece, authorising him to reveal who had sold them to him. I traded the last ten to a young man named Maradiaga in exchange for thirty stamps of President Paz Baraona. One night, he came to my house saying he was the nephew of Miguel A Dubon, who had asked him to provide him with a few of these stamps. When speaking of Dubon, I noticed he was hesitant; I asked him where the former was and he was unable to tell me, so I refused. The next day he returned saying that the stamps for the exchange belonged to a Mr Amapala, who wanted ten each red and green to conclude the trade. He left the thirty stamps and asked me to think the deal over. About a week later, he came somewhat shamefully and told me that a German priest living at the Seminary was willing to accept the ten red stamps only in exchange for the thirty of Paz Baraona.

He owned up that he would be getting a tip for his work. I was intrigued by the various names he quoted but to get rid of him I decided to let him have those ten red stamps. All this occurred between June 12 and 15. Afterwards, I learned that Dr Raul Duron Membreño was behind all these intrigues. A further detail was that the thirty stamps I got in exchange had been offered for sale to the same honourable gentleman I mentioned earlier, as he recognised them once they were in his hands. Dr Duron Membreño had offered him a large quantity of the Paz Baraona commemoratives in an album, in sheets of twenty-five. The price asked was $6 per stamp, or $150 per sheet. The gentleman declined the offer which he considered too high.

The next day Duron reduced his price to $100 per sheet, but the gentleman still refused and Duron, to prove that he could reduce the price no further, told him they belonged to someone of Amapala. The transaction did not take place. It is proved that Maradiaga worked for Duron and assisted him in his intrigues, including a bogus letter which he was careful to retrieve.

Don Raul insists on talking about "errors" which in my opinion do not exist. According to the Philatelic Dictionary an error means "a stamp printed in the wrong colour, or with one or more printing flaws". For this particular issue, the Executive Power did not specify the colours of the stamps so all the colours used by Litografia could be considered as legal, as were those of the Lopez Gutierrez commemoratives, which were printed in gold, silver, bronze and carmine, and those of Paz Baraona, printed in blue, dark blue, rose, carmine and green. In both cases the colours had not been specified. So this most recent issue, whose colour had not been specified either, cannot scientifically be considered as an "error".

The daily paper "El Sol" states in its editions Nos. 1008 and 1009 that several civil servants are involved in speculation. In edition No. 1010 that only one is implicated. The journalist and informer quote no name but the many details given are quite explicit. Mr Duron promises to reveal documents which will throw full light on the matter. In fact, they have been forged with his helper Maradiaga, and are soley to foster his philatelic career.

In the next paragraph, he goes on to say that a high official was requested to produce the "reversed colours" or "errors". The official in question allegedly declared that about five hundred stamps of each of the errors were produced and sent to the USA for sale at high prices. The official had traded an error to him and was offering further copies of the green 1c. All this was contained in a forged letter from Maradiaga, which was circulated all over town and in which my name was quoted. Dr Duron even had the nerve to come to the general direction of mails the day before yesterday to ask when I was going to reply to the letter and I answered: "You have attacked me so I will reply through the press".

I never made such declarations to Maradiaga. I explained quite at length how I got the ninety-five red 2c and ten green 1c stamps. For the eighty-five I sold to the distinguished gentleman, whose name must remain secret, I got $25.50 silver at 30cts per stamp and for the ten to Maradiaga-Duron I got thirty Paz Baraona stamps. The public can judge what a marvellous transaction this was. As far as the five hundred errors of each that I allegedly sent to the USA, I authorise the most zealous defendores of public probity to investigate in any way they see fit. If the five hundred errors each produced were sent to the USA, there should be none available here, but later on they affirm that there are plentiful stocks of them, which shows just how logical they are.

We will continue to study this matter on the basis of genuine and important documents.

Napoleon Paz Paredes, Tegucigalpa, July 13, 1929."

"THE TREASURY MINISTER AND THE POSTAL IMBROGLIO

Civil servant reveals information about the scandalous fraud denounced by 'El Sol'.

I have read the interminable and boastful article of don Napoleon Paz Paredes in 'El Cronista' by which he tries to justify himself. First, don Napoleon admits that he suggested (with an idea in the back of his mind?) the change of colours after the printing had been started. This points to a lack of seriousness, especially as he is the promoter of the issue. The main fact however is that Litografia Nacional handed over to the Exchequer, as is proved by the books, 20,230 stamps, amongst which were ninety green stamps of 1c and one hundred and ten red 2cts. They are the reversed colours which did not please don Napoleon. These ninety, and one hundred and ten stamps respectively were handed over to the accountant of values of the General Direction of Mails. The Treasury Ministry ordered that these ninety and one hundred and ten stamps respectively be returned to the Exchequer and destroyed, and they WERE DESTROYED. That is, all the reversed colours (as errors are not to the liking of epicurean don Napoleon) were destroyed and then, by MIRACLE OR MAGIC, reappear amonst the stamps don Napoleon ADMITS HAVING BOUGHT, ninety five red 2c and ten green 1c. What luck! Just the stamps which had not been to his liking and which were destroyed on orders from the Treasury Ministry are amongst those he gets to give him headaches, and he sells them for $0.30 apiece. It would have been wiser for him to send them to Roessler in N.J. or to any other firm!

I am not going to revert to this matter. The Treasury Minister called me to his office to get all the facts; how he uses them is none of my business. Don Napoleon's good political renoun should outweigh this scandal, even though Mr Budde of San Pedro Sula was informed that five hundred stamps were printed in reversed colours! To conclude I will just quote the quatrain of my Rhetorics and Poetics student days starting by:
'In the times of barbarian nations...'.

Raúl Durón Membréno, Tegucigalpa, July 16, 1929."

HONDURAS: THE GOVERNMENT PRINTING WORKS' ISSUES

Following Jose Mejia's article on the method of printing employed by the Government Printing Works in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, Richard Washburn writes:

"Since he wrote this both he and I have looked closely at SG 135-6, Scott 127, and have reached the same conclusion - that this stamp, long considered to be a lithograph, is actually a typograph (letter press/surface printing).

This stamp, printed in 1909, because of an acute shortage of the 1 centavo value, was laid out in sheets of sixty subjects (five rows of twelve) perforated 11½, on both a thick white glazed woven paper and a thin hard paper. Covers showing actual usage of the stamp are scarce. After close scrutiny under a 30x magnifier you can see the green ink pushed out to the edges of the design lines (indicative of a typograph).

As Jose mentioned it seems that everyone took it for granted that a "Litografia Nacional" would only print by lithography. Seems this is not so. Maybe we should suggest to catalogue editors thet they take a new look at these issues from 1909 onwards to ascertain the exact method of printing. They are probably all done by typography." (I will draw their attention to this - Ed)

COLUMBUS DIE PROOFS

We illustrate here three pages from the award winning collection of Columbus formed by John Fosbery, and which has now been sold (the final page is now in my own collection).

COLUMBUS

The First Voyage

Land Ahoy!

Honduras: 1892

Undenominated
Die Proof

Plate proofs in issued
and unissued colours

COLUMBUS

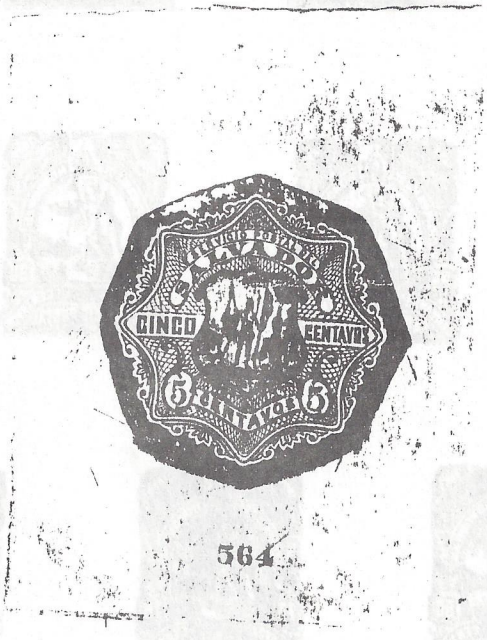
The First Voyage

1892 El Salvador — Composite die proof for Postal Stationery: Hamilton Bank Note Company

DOCE Y MEDIO CENTAVOS 12½ CENTAVOS 12½
TRES CENTAVOS 3 CENTAVOS 3
DOS CENTAVOS 2 CENTAVOS 2
VEINTIDOS CENTAVOS 22 CENTAVOS 22
SEIS CENTAVOS 6 CENTAVOS 6
UN CENTAVO 1 CENTAVO 1

Envelopes: 1c and 22 centavos

Wrappers: 2c, 3c, 6c, and 12.5 centavos



Die Proof 564 for 5c envelope; probably similar die proofs exist for 10c, 11c and 20c envelopes not included in the large composite array

It is interesting to note the involvement of Bradbury Wilkinson in the production of these dies which were later used by the Hamilton Bank Note Company.

COLUMBUS

Land Ahoy!

Die Proof in approximate colour of the 2 pesos telegraph.
Note the semi-circular motif and dot at each side—these were deleted from the issued stamps

This die proof came in a batch of die proofs from Bradbury Wilkinson. It is known that they sometimes worked with the American Bank Note Company, but as far as is known, they had nothing to do with the Hamilton Bank Note Co.

1892 Nicaragua

Telegraph set in same denominations but different colours from postal issues
"Specimen" overprints

It is interesting to note the involvement of Bradbury Wilkinson in the production of these dies which were later used by the Hamilton Bank Note Company.

COLUMBUS

Land Ahoy!

Die Proof in approximate colour of the 2 pesos telegraph.
Note the semi-circular motif and dot at each side—these were deleted from the issued stamps

This die proof came in a batch of die proofs from Bradbury Wilkinson. It is known that they sometimes worked with the American Bank Note Company, but as far as is known, they had nothing to do with the Hamilton Bank Note Co.

1892 Nicaragua

Telegraph set in same denominations but different colours from postal issues
"Specimen" overprints

NICARAGUA: THE 'CARTERO' MARKINGS Sept '82

A recent purchase of three covers bearing 'Cartero No 3, Granada' by J A van Rijn of Holland, extends the earliest known date of usage to 30 November 1897. It is now known that this particular mark was in use from 30.11.1897 to 4.6.1899.

NICARAGUA: A PREVIOUSLY UNRECOGNISED WATERMARK?

Michael Schreiber of Troy, OH, writes, "I can report the following Nicaraguan wrappers with the same watermark reported by Derek Pocock to be on the 1894 wrappers. I have the 1894 1c wrapper with the watermark reading vertically downward, and the 4c with it horizontal and right side up. This is what Pocock reported, although he did not specify the direction of the watermark on each denomination.

I also have the 1897 4c wrapper with the same watermark reading downward. My 1897 1c and 2c wrappers are unwatermarked. All directions are based on viewing the wrapper from the front."

GUATEMALA: AN UNLISTED CANCELLATION?

Several readers responded with information regarding this cancellation, which can be found in Guatemala 1 on pages 245-6. It was also pointed out that an article on the subject appeared in Issue No.14 p10-12 and Issue No.15 p6.

This would seem a good opportunity to remind readers of the International Society of Guatemala Collectors, whose Secretary-Treasurer, Mr G W Kendall, can be contacted through PO Box 55545, Houston, TX 77055, USA.

AND FINALLY - A cover sent from Managua to New Jersey in 1906, via Corinto (backstamp) and San José. Why the Costa Rican routing?